

ABSTRACT

Early Childhood Development (ECDE) is currently the backbone of formal Education systems in both developed and developing nations globally Kenya inclusive. Parental involvement in a child's education is consistently found to be positively associated with a child's academic performance. However, there has been little investigation on how and to what extent parents get involved in their pre-primary children's education. The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of parental involvement on the acquisition of literacy competencies among pre-primary children in Kenya. The specific objectives of the study were to examine the influence of, home to school communication, home parenting environment; parental volunteering services; and home learning on the acquisition of literacy competencies among preschoolers in Manga Sub-County, Nyamira County. The study was based on the Overlapping Spheres of Influence theory proposed by Epstein, utilizing Epstein's theoretical lens on parental involvement. The study employed concurrent triangulation research design under a mixed-methods research approach. The units of analysis for the study were 65 public primary schools comprising of 65 head teachers, 65 ECDE school lead teachers, 210 preschool parents, 210 preschool children, and 3 ECDE divisional Coordinators. The study sample consisted of 20 head teachers, 136 preschool parents, 136 preschoolers, 65 ECDE lead teachers, and 3 ECDE Divisional Coordinators. The study employed Questionnaires, Interviews Schedule, and Focus Group Discussion for data collection. The validity of the instrument was ensured by expert judgment, while the reliability of the questionnaires was established by the test-retest method and an overall coefficient of 0.724 was attained. Besides, the internal consistency of the questionnaire was ascertained through Cronbach's alpha coefficient analysis, where an average alpha value of 0.811 was achieved. Quantitative data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.0, using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Findings of the study revealed that generally, the preschool parental involvement was either low or moderate in all the four aspects of parental involvement; home parenting, home-school communication, volunteering services, and learning at home. However, the study showed that there was a statistically significant positive association between all the four aspects of parental involvement and the acquisition of literacy competencies among preschoolers. Home parenting accounted for 26.4% (Adjusted coefficient $R^2=.264$), home to school communication accounted for 23.9% (Adjusted $R^2=.239$), parental volunteering services accounted for 14.6% (Adjusted $R^2=.146$) and home learning accounted for 38.5% (Adjusted $R^2=.385$) of the variation in the acquisition of basic literacy competencies. All the four aspects of parental involvement were significant predictors of the acquisition of basic literacy competencies among preschoolers. As a whole, parental involvement through Epstein's theoretical lens accounted for 80.6% (Adjusted $R^2=.806$) of the variation in the acquisition of literacy competencies among preschoolers. It was concluded that effective parental involvement through Epstein's is vital for basic literacy competencies acquisition. The study recommended the sensitization of preschool parents on the importance of involvement in their children's education. It is hoped that this study would be significant to all the stakeholders in education. Lastly, a study on effective parental home determinants of pre-primary learning would expound the understanding of the present study.